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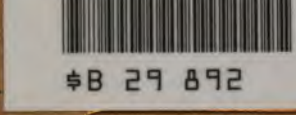

MARTYR

A DRAMA

JEAN LEEMAN

GIFT OF
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MARTYR · A TRAGEDY OF BELGIUM · *DRAMA in* FIVE ACTS BY JEAN LEEMAN ·

PREFACE BY M. HENRY LA FONTAINE SENATOR OF BELGIUM · *TRANSLATED* FROM THE FRENCH BY MRS. ALICE CHITTENDEN

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

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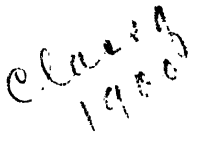

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To

MR. RAPHAEL WEILL

Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur

And to

MR. ALB. VAN DER NAILLEN, SR.

Author, Chevalier de l'Ordre de Leopold

Gentlemen:

I deem it an honor to dedicate my play to you; kindly accept this as a token of appreciation and respect.

* * * *

When, after his daily journey through heaven, at the close of a summer day, the radiant wanderer in a luminous apotheosis sets in the glittering west, the ravished human soul contemplates this eternal masterpiece of the Creator with a feeling of admiration blended with sorrow and regret . . . It is the end of a beautiful day.

So do we admire with the same sentiment the career of the upright man and the philanthropist.

JEAN LEEMAN

San Francisco, California

July 14, 1915

PREFACE

War, monstrous war, abhorred by the mothers, is once more passing over the stricken world, which is powerless to prevent or abolish the scourge. By a thousand avenues, however, men and women are coming forward to drive out forever this monster which for centuries has fed on human blood. Some are already planning the future civilization, others are showing up the horrors by pencil and brush, by words and pen, They stigmatize it and vow it to the gemonies. To these latter the theatre is an ideal forum. Before the crowds, worshipers of might, all those slain upon the altar of the idol should arise from their graves and cry out their miseries and terrors.

Among the horrors which the German invasion has brought upon the tortured populations, that which has subjected the women and girls to the lust of the drunken soldiery is doubtless the most abominable, for it has condemned these innocent victims to the most horrible moral sufferings.

The drama, written by M. Jean Leeman, in a simple and sustained action, shows us through the anguish of one of these poor maidens. The author most happily has avoided the declamatory phrases so frequent in similar works. He makes his personages speak their own every-day language, leaving the drama a gripping reality.

Every character is painted with vigor and the rapid action brings out all the pathetic plot in a powerful manner. This will be of great value at the time of the staging, for it will leave a deep and lasting impression

upon the public. Gradually intensified, the incidents follow each other to the very end.

The skillful manner in which the culprit is discovered, unmasked, exposed, and finally compelled to confess his crime; his tragic suicide when confronted with eternal dishonor, maturing in a thrilling climax, assures to the play a logical conclusion.

Among the numerous existing and future theatrical works which will be produced on the stage during and after this horrible and most criminal war, M. Leeman's drama will surely survive for its co-ordination and the intense sentiment of life with which it is conceived and animated. It will remain one of the most incisive pages of the indictment that finally will tear mankind from the eternal nightmare of murder and violence.

H. La Fontaine,
Senator of Belgium.

PREFACE

La guerre, la guerre monstrueuse détestée par les mères, une fois de plus passe sur le monde, épouvanté de son impuissance à la prévenir et à l'abolir. Par mille avenues pourtant on sent venir des hommes et des femmes décidés à livrer le combat formidable et géant qui doit pour toujours la chasser de cette terre nourrie de sang humain depuis des siècles. Les uns dressent les plans de la cité prochaine, les autres formulent le réquisitoire terrifiant des méfaits de la guerre. Par le pinceau et le crayon, par la parole et la plume, ils la stigmatisent et la vouent aux gémonies. Et le théâtre s'offre à ces derniers comme une tribune idéale. Il faut que devant les foules, adoratrices de la force, ils sortent de leurs tombes et crient leurs misères et leurs transes tous ceux qui ont été immolés sur l'autel de l'idole.

Parmi toutes les horreurs, que l'invasion germanique a déversées, sur les populations torturées, celle, qui a livré au sadisme d'une soldatesque effrénée les femmes et les filles, est certainement l'une des plus abominables, car elle a condamné des victimes sans défense aux plus atroces souffrances morales.

Le drame conçu par M. Jean Leeman, en une action simple et soutenue, nous fait vivre les angoisses de l'une de ces malheureuses victimes. L'auteur a échappé au ton déclamatoire si fréquent, hélas, dans des oeuvres similaires. Il a fait parler à ses personnages leur langage naturel et journalier, sans tomber dans la brutalité ou la grossièreté et son drame néanmoins reste d'un réalisme poignant.

Chacun des personnages est esquissé avec vigueur et la rapidité de certaines épisodes en fait valoir toute l'âpreté. C'est un mérite qui, lors de la mise en scène de l'oeuvre, lui assurera une action certaine et forte sur le public. Les incidents se suivent en une gradation constante et l'intérêt se maintient jusqu'au bout sans fléchir.

La manière habile dont le coupable est découvert, démasqué et acculé à l'aveu de son crime et le dénouement tragique qui l'oblige à se frapper lui-même pour échapper au pire des déshonneurs assurent au drame une conclusion logique et pathétique à la fois.

Parmi les multiples oeuvres théâtrales, qui ont vu et qui verront le jour pendant et après la plus affreuse et la plus criminelle des guerres, le drame de M. Jean Leeman sera certainement l'un de ceux qui mériteront de survivre pour sa tenue et le sentiment très intense de vie qui l'anime tout entier. Il demeurera comme l'une des pages les plus incisives de l'acte d'accusation qui doit arracher enfin l'humanité à son cauchemar séculaire de meurtre et de violence.

H. La Fontaine,
Sénateur de Belgique.

MARTYR

Act I.

MARTYR

The Cast

JEAN BRUNEELS . . . . . *A young farmer*
HEINRICH VON RAUCH, *Captain in the German Army*
JOSEF SCHMIDT . . . . . *Von Rauch's orderly*
BERNARD VALKIERS . . . . . *Fiancé of Louise*
JACQUES VALKIERS . . . . . *Brother of Bernard*
ROSSAK, VON BLIESS } . . . *Officers in the German Army*
M. LE BRUN . . . . . *The judge*
ROULANDS . . . . . *An innkeeper*
LOUISE BRUNEELS . . . . . *Jean's sister*
MARTHA . . . . . *Louise's rival*
MME. BRUNEELS, *The grandmother of Jean and Louise*

A FOUR-YEAR-OLD CHILD
A LAWYER
A PRIEST
A SHERIFF
A SECRETARY
MALE AND FEMALE VILLAGERS

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

MARTYR

The play is laid in Belgium, in a village near Louvain, at the beginning of the German invasion of 1914.

JEAN BRUNEELS, *a young farmer, and his sister* LOUISE, *well-educated young people, such as are often found in the Belgian villages, are working a farm together; their old grandmother, a paralytic, lives with them. At the first call to arms,* JEAN *rejoins his regiment, leaving his grandmother to the care of* LOUISE. *The servants take flight upon the approach of the enemy; the two women are left alone on the farm. The military authorities having levied upon all the horses,* LOUISE *and her grandmother are unable to escape.*

BERNARD VALKIERS, LOUISE'S *fiancé, and his brother* JACQUES, *sons of a farmer of the same village, have also rejoined their regiment.*

In the first Act the stage represents a road; the house of the BRUNEELS *is at the right of the road; the door of the house is facing the audience; the windows look out upon the stage, and under them is placed a bench along the house. At the left of the stage are woods and fields. In the distance at the rear is seen the city of Louvain.*

[*At the rising of the curtain,* JEAN *is talking with* LOUISE *and his* GRANDMOTHER; *the latter is sitting on a chair placed near the the door.* JEAN *is in military dress, and carries his gun slung across his shoulder.*]

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ACT I.

Scene 1.

LOUISE. But how were you able to get here?

JEAN. For two days our regiment has been encamped in the woods on the road from Louvain to Malines, three leagues from here; Bernard, Jacques and I asked the officer in command for leave of absence for a few hours; he allowed us to go at our own risk; I was so eager to see you once again.

LOUISE. And where are Bernard and Jacques?

JEAN. I have just left them on the road; they are going to see their folks.

LOUISE. They are going to see their parents! Oh, the poor boys!

JEAN. Well, what's the matter?

LOUISE. What is the matter! . . . Their farm is destroyed; the Germans have sacked the village and killed many people; father Valkiers was assassinated, as well as his wife, the two daughters and the youngest son. Happily for us, we are here a little distance from the road or you would not have found us alive.

JEAN. [*Thoughtfully.*] The parents dead. . . . The farm destroyed.

LOUISE. Yes; there is not much left of the farm.

JEAN. My God! my God! My poor friends must be mad with grief and rage. What a calamity! [*Grasping his gun.*] Let the Prussians beware; they shall pay for all that.

LOUISE. Now, Jean, grandmother and I are afraid to stay here.

JEAN. Of course, I understand that; it is absolutely necessary that I get you away; but how is it to be done, that's the question. .

THE GRANDMOTHER. My dear boy, that will be very difficult. You will not find a horse or carriage for ten leagues round.

LOUISE. That's true; what the military authorities have not taken, the Germans have.

JEAN. Quite a problem, indeed; well, this is what I will do; I will try to reach Louvain this evening, and if I cannot return myself, I will send someone to take you across the frontier; the roads to the north are still open.

THE GRANDMOTHER. Try to do that, my son, for

we are not at all safe here; the Germans may return at any moment.

LOUISE. Yes, we have escaped once, but if they come back, it will surely be our turn.

[*Enter* BERNARD *and* JACQUES. *The brothers come on the stage with their guns on their shoulders;* BERNARD *is very sad,* JACQUES *is sobbing.* LOUISE *goes to meet* BERNARD *and takes his hand.*]

LOUISE. My poor friend.

BERNARD. The bandits . . . the murderers . . . they have killed our poor mother, our father, our sisters; they did not even spare our little brother, a child twelve years old; they killed him with the bayonet.

LOUISE. I know all. After the Prussians had passed, I was anxious to see your mother; when I reached the farm only the barn was standing; the dead bodies were there; I shall never forget the sight.

BERNARD. Ah . . . it only remains for us to avenge them, and with that I charge myself. [*He brandishes his gun.*] Wherever I find one of these vermin on my path, I will crush him without pity. We have nothing left; henceforth my life is consecrated to vengeance.

LOUISE. Bernard, have faith in God; better days will come.

BERNARD. [*Putting his hand on* LOUISE'S *shoulder.*] Yes, Louise, I know you are good and brave, but

I cannot think of God now; vengeance first! vengeance! nothing but vengeance!

LOUISE. Bernard, all these innocent victims will be avenged. God will avenge them.

BERNARD. Perhaps; but I am going to do my part. Come, Jacques, nothing will be gained by sorrowing; let us rejoin our regiment.

JACQUES. Poor mother . . . she, so good. I will never see her again!

BERNARD. Well, Jean, are you coming?

JEAN. I will go with you a little distance. I am going to try to find a horse and carriage to take grandmother and Louise to Holland. Then I will rejoin the regiment. I have a sacred duty to perform; they first, after that the regiment.

BERNARD. You are right; but how are you going to do it?

JEAN. My faith, I don't know. Perhaps, crossing the fields I may find a farm that has been spared, where I can get a horse.

BERNARD. As you will, my friend, though there is little chance of success. Well, good-bye, Madame Bruneels. [*He shakes hands with the* GRANDMOTHER.] Good-bye, Louise.

LOUISE. [*Going to* BERNARD.] Farewell, Bernard. Have courage, and may God keep you.

BERNARD. Good-bye, my dear, good-bye. [*He embraces* LOUISE.]

JACQUES. [*In a low voice.*] Good-bye, Madame Bruneels. Good-bye, Louise.

JEAN. [*Embracing his grandmother and his sister.*] I will try to return immediately, but if I do not, then may God keep you. Farewell, farewell!

[*The three men leave the stage.* LOUISE, *accompanying them to the rear, embraces* BERNARD *again, and returns to her grandmother.*]

LOUISE. Poor Bernard, poor brother; will they ever return?

[*A red light is thrown upon the scenery at the back.*]

THE GRANDMOTHER. Look, Louise! What is that great column of smoke and fire in the distance?

LOUISE. Good heavens! The Germans have set fire to the four corners of Louvain!

THE GRANDMOTHER. Oh! my poor Louvain! Oh! the poor people! What will become of them! But why do the Germans commit all these cruelties? They have nothing to gain in thus utterly destroying the country.

LOUISE. Grandmother, it is not very hard to find the reason. The resistance of the Belgians has exasperated the Prussians. They had counted on taking Paris by the 15th of August, but they had to content themselves with Louvain, besides losing many men. Mad with rage, they are massacring all in their way. Since the Belgians blocked a campaign carefully prepared for half a century, the Germans have sworn to annihilate our country; they are avenging themselves, killing women, old

people, children; abusing maids and then shooting them; burning towns and villages; sweeping everything from their road; respecting nothing, neither the cottage, nor the mother, nor the suckling, not even God.

THE GRANDMOTHER. How frightful! how frightful! Let us hope that they will not return this way; they would surely burn the farm.

LOUISE. That's certain. For three weeks they have not left off pillaging, murdering and burning. They will not spare us.

THE GRANDMOTHER. Then they killed the whole Valkiers family?

LOUISE. Yes, grandmother; I did not want to tell you. I feared to frighten you. Happily Bernard and Jacques had gone, or they would have shared the same fate. Now they will at least be able to avenge their dead.

THE GRANDMOTHER. But why did not father Valkiers and his family leave before the Prussians came?

LOUISE. Well, father Valkiers, like everyone else, thought the Germans were soldiers, and not murderers. No one would have believed that they would systematically assassinate the peaceable inhabitants of the country. In leaving his house, Valkiers would have scarificed his harvest; the product of a whole year of labor would have been lost by his flight.

THE GRANDMOTHER. Yes, and to remain was death.

I understand how painful it is for the old to leave their homes, but better that than to be killed. And you, little girl, you should not remain here. It is to be hoped that Jean may be able to take us away.

LOUISE. If he comes to take us, we will go together; if he does not come, then, grandmother, I remain with you.

THE GRANDMOTHER. Yes, I know how good you are, Louise, but it is not worth while to risk your life for an old woman like me.

LOUISE. My duty is here, grandmother; and happen what may, I will not fail to do it.

THE GRANDMOTHER. Well, do not let us speak of it any longer, and may God protect us. Do you not think, dear, that it would be better to go in?

LOUISE. As you like, grandmother.

THE GRANDMOTHER. Let us go; I should like to sleep awhile.

LOUISE. You are right. Since the Germans have now passed, I believe all immediate danger is over. Come.

[LOUISE *helps her grandmother to rise.*]

THE GRANDMOTHER. I am very tired, Louise, and much disturbed about our Jean.

LOUISE. God is good and just, grandmother; He will protect him. Jean will return.

[*While talking, the two women disappear inside the house. They close the door and slip the bolt. The stage is slightly darkened.*]

Scene 2.

[VON RAUCH *and* SCHMIDT *approach the house from the other side of the road and listen at the door.* VON RAUCH *makes a sign to* SCHMIDT *to examine the surroundings of the house; after a few moments they return to the door and listen.*]

VON RAUCH. They are alone.

SCHMIDT. Do you think so?

VON RAUCH. I am quite sure. [*Knocking at the door.*] Open!

LOUISE. [*From the inside.*] Who are you?

VON RAUCH. Open, or we will break down the door.

LOUISE. What do you want?

VON RAUCH. We want something to eat and to drink.

LOUISE. We are in bed; return tomorrow.

VON RAUCH. If you don't open instantly, we will set fire to the house; make haste; in a moment it will be too late.

LOUISE. Have pity on my poor grandmother!

VON RAUCH. Open! Give us to drink. Hurry! hurry!

LOUISE. We have nothing in the house.

VON RAUCH. [*To* SCHMIDT.] Light the torch.

[SCHMIDT *pulls a small torch from his pocket and lights it;* VON RAUCH *takes it from him and goes toward the window; with a horrible grin he shows it to* LOUISE, *then*

gives a blow with it upon the frame, the flame gushing out.]

[*With a thundering voice.*] By thunder! Open! or I apply the torch!

LOUISE. [*Drawing the bolt and opening the door.*] Have pity! Have pity on two defenseless women.

VON RAUCH. [*Laughing diabolically and returning the torch to* SCHMIDT.] Ah! ah! . . . at last. We are not going to hurt you. No, no, no, my little darling; not the least in the world. [*He tries to embrace* LOUISE.]

LOUISE. [LOUISE *with a quick movement repulses him.*] Let me alone; what do you want?

VON RAUCH. First, my dear, give us something good to drink.

LOUISE. We have only the beer of the country.

VON RAUCH. All right, the beer of the country goes. My orderly will go with you to get it.

LOUISE. It is not necessary; I will bring it.

VON RAUCH. [*To* SCHMIDT.] Follow this girl, and look well at what she does; see if there is no wine.

SCHMIDT. Very well, Captain.

[SCHMIDT *and* LOUISE *diasppear into the house.* VON RAUCH *reflects a moment, then takes a piece of chalk from his pocket and writes upon the door:*

ES IST VERBOTEN DIESES HAUS IN BRAND ZU SETZEN.

GUTE LEUTE.
HEINRICH VON RAUCH.
*HAUPTMANN.**

VON RAUCH. [*Rubbing his hands together.*] In this way no one will disturb us. We are going to have a fine time; later, if necessary, I well set the house afire myself.

LOUISE. [*Still followed by* SCHMIDT, *who carries a bottle of wine in each hand.* LOUISE *carries a pot of beer and two glasses; she places all on the bench.*] There, sir.

VON RAUCH. Ah! ah! Wine! . . . I thought you said you had no wine. You have lied to me. [*To* SCHMIDT.] Are there many of these bottles?

SCHMIDT. These are all that I found, Captain.

VON RAUCH. Tell me, darling, you have many others, have you not?

LOUISE. No, sir. These two were for my grandmother. The doctor ordered her to take a little every day. These are all that remained.

VON RAUCH. [*Taking a knife furnished with a corkscrew from his pocket and drawing the cork.*] Well, well . . . that's a fine excuse; the old lady will have to do without it for some days. We, we need strength. [*He fills his glass.*] To your health, girly, and to that of the grandmother. [*Empties the glass at a draught, and smacks his lips.*] Zounds! what a good wine . . . a little too rich for the grandmother. Ah, ah, ah.

*It is forbidden to burn this house. They are good people.
Henry Von Rauch, Captain.

[*Laughs and refills the glass.*] Eh, Schmidt, the beer is for you.

SCHMIDT. Thank you, Captain.

[*He drinks a glass of beer, and then prowls about the farm, still watching the two while going and coming.*]

VON RAUCH. Come, little girl, uncork the other bottle for me. [LOUISE *makes a sign of refusal.*] How, you will not pour for me?

LOUISE. Help yourself, sir.

VON RAUCH. Well, little girl, you are neither reasonable nor grateful; see what I have done in your absence. I have written on your door not to burn your house. I am thus making you a present of your home. You are safe for the duration of the war. No one will harm you now.

[*He uncorks the bottle and pours out a drink.*]

LOUISE. I am very grateful to you, sir.

VON RAUCH. You say that very faintly, my girl. Come, sit down here. [*He sits down on the bench.*] Let us talk a little. How old are you?

LOUISE. [*Seating herself at a good distance from* VON RAUCH.] I am nineteen, sir.

VON RAUCH. Really? You are a big girl for your age. Where are your parents?

LOUISE. They are dead. I have only my grandmother, who is a paralytic, and my brother.

VON RAUCH. Your brother; where is he?

LOUISE. He was recalled to serve under his colors at the beginning of the war.

VON RAUCH. Ah! he is one of these fellows who

shoot us without mercy; these rascals fell upon us last night and we lost many men; but they will pay for that.

[*He empties his glass and fills it again.*]

LOUISE. Do you not think they are doing their duty?

VON RAUCH. Certainly, certainly; but we will do ours also. In three months we will dictate the law to Europe, then we will reward them for their audacity. By the way, are you married?

LOUISE. No, sir.

VON RAUCH. You surely have a lover. All beautiful girls have lovers. Ah, ah, ah . . . [*He laughs.*]

LOUISE. If you think I am in a mood for jesting at this moment, you are mistaken.

VON RAUCH. There, there, there! that's all right, that's all right. [*Approaching and taking* LOUISE *by the chin.*] Come, give a little kiss to the captain.

LOUISE. [*Getting up and recoiling a few steps.*] Let me alone.

VON RAUCH. [*Again approaching.*] Eh! eh! don't play the prude; don't try that on us soldiers.

LOUISE. [*Still recoiling.*] I don't know what you mean, but all I ask is that you will leave me in peace.

VON RAUCH. [*Seizing* LOUISE's *wrist.*] Oh, that's all right, I like women who resist a little. Come . . . a little kiss; just a little one; ah, ah, ah!

LOUISE. [*With a sudden movement she escapes from* VON RAUCH *and rushes toward the fields, but after*

a few steps he catches her again.] Leave me! Leave me! Leave me!

VON RAUCH. Well, well, my beauty; so you wish to run away. You are not reasonable. We always take forcibly what is not granted willingly.

LOUISE. Leave me, leave me; take all that you want from the house, but let me go. [*She struggles.*] Let me go!

VON RAUCH. [*Sneering.*] It is very dangerous, my dear, to run about the fields in these troublous times; we shall be much better before a good table with something to eat and to drink.

[*He puts his arm around her waist.*]

LOUISE. If you touch me I will call for help.

[*Trying to free herself, she struggles with* VON RAUCH *for a few moments, when he picks her up and carries her into the house.*]

LOUISE. Help! Help! Help! . . .

[*From the bottom of the stage,* SCHMIDT *looks at what is going on with an air of indifference, then slowly comes forward and mounts guard before the house. For a few moments the cries of* LOUISE *are heard, then there is silence.* SCHMIDT *walks up and down; he goes to the window, looks inside, and then resumes his march along the house.*]

SCHMIDT. And to say that we are commanded by such brutes!

[*Enter* JEAN, *who approaches the house stealthily, and, noticing* SCHMIDT, *conceals*

himself behind a tree. SCHMIDT, *who has heard some noise, goes toward the woods; but seeing nothing he returns to the house and takes up his post before the door.* JEAN *waits until he reappears to send a ball after him; then he rushes toward the house, while* SCHMIDT, *wounded, makes his escape in the woods.* JEAN *tries to open the door, but finds it locked from the inside; he breaks it with the butt of his gun. It yields just as* VON RAUCH *takes flight through the window.* JEAN *attacks him, and a struggle between the two men takes place on the road.*]

JEAN. Ah! you scoundrel! So you attack lonely women!

VON RAUCH. [*With sarcasm.*] Come here, wretch of a Belgian; I am going to send you to God or to hell. Ah, ah, ah! . . .

JEAN. [*Giving* VON RAUCH *a wound with his bayonet.*] There, bandit, take that!

VON RAUCH. [*Feeling for a second his face, which is bleeding; he throws himself on* JEAN, *and strikes him in the breast with his sword.*] There, comrade, with interest!

[JEAN *sinks down and* VON RAUCH *escapes.*]

JEAN. [*Dragging himself toward the house, gaining ground slowly, one hand on the ground, the other on his breast.*] Louise! Louise! Help! Help! [*He continues to crawl toward the house.*] Louise! Louise!

LOUISE. [*Tottering, her hair dishevelled, she appears on the threshold; with haggard eyes she stops there for a moment, then she rushes toward her brother.*] Jean! Jean! You are wounded!

JEAN. Yes . . . yes . . . in the breast . . . but here . . . what has happened?

LOUISE. Oh! It is horrible! It is horrible!

JEAN. What . . . what . . . have they killed . . . grandmother?

LOUISE. No, no, she is all right; she is in bed.

JEAN. Ah . . . then I understand . . . I understand . . . the monsters!

LOUISE. [*Trying to raise him.*] Come, lean on me.

[JEAN *raises himself a little, then slips to the ground.*]

LOUISE. Poor brother, poor brother.

JEAN. [*Carrying his hand to his throat.*] Louise . . . ah . . . I believe . . . I am going . . . to die . . . farewell . . . farewell . . .

[*He falls backward and remains motionless.* LOUISE, *weeping, kneels near him.*]

MARTYR

Act II.

ACT II.

The farm of the BRUNEELS *one year after. The stage shows a room on the ground floor of the farm-house. Two windows and a door at the left give on the road; at the right two doors lead to the sleeping rooms. A large table in the middle of the room, some scattered chairs. On the wall a statue of the Virgin.*

[*At the rising of the curtain, the* GRANDMOTHER *is sitting in an arm-chair near the table.* LOUISE *sits near her grandmother. While knitting, she rocks a cradle.*]

LOUISE. Tell me, grandmother, has Jean spoken again about this marriage?

THE GRANDMOTHER. Yes; he speaks of it every day; he spoke of it last night; he spoke of it this morning; he wishes you to marry as soon as possible. Bernard is a good fellow, who understands your misfortune, and he is intelligent enough not to care what people say.

LOUISE. Grandmother, it is absolutely impossible. I am very fond of Bernard, and for this reason I cannot marry him. What would life be a few months after marriage? It would be unbearable.

THE GRANDMOTHER. Bernard loves you; there is nothing to justify your fears.

LOUISE. No, no; I have carefully considered my situation. Bernard's first impulse is good, and I believe him sincere; but as the child grows up, when he will have every day under his eyes this creature whom he must detest, and whom he can only curse, what will be his sufferings? How will he then regret this marriage which now he desires so much?

THE GRANDMOTHER. Of course, the child is in the way; but you might put it in the care of some good woman near by, where you could see it from time to time.

LOUISE. No, no, it is impossible. I love my child; it is not his fault that he came into the world, the poor thing! Did he ask to come? Must he submit to the consequences of a crime of which we both were the victims? No, no; I wish to bring him up myself, the poor darling. [*She gazes at the cradle.*] He has only me in the world.

THE GRANDMOTHER. Louise, you are not reasonable; you are young and overwrought. Try to follow the advice of your grandmother, who desires only your good; you love your child, which is only right and natural; but we must find a way

out of every trouble. Be wise; marry Bernard. That will assure your future and the child's. If you undertake the struggle alone, with this child on your arm, your life will be one great Calvary. You will prepare for yourself a martyrdom. You do not foresee the incessant suffering. Listen to me, Louise, take my advice.

LOUISE. No, it is impossible! In a short time Bernard would reproach me for having accepted this marriage, and he would be right. My life is ruined, but I have not the right to embitter his. He would awake from this dream of a day, and remember the outrage of the vile Prussian! No, no; it is impossible.

THE GRANDMOTHER. My poor child! You don't know the human heart. Little by little, forgetfulness will come, and in a few years this sad story will be entirely effaced from his memory; the bleeding wound of today will close and become only a remembrance.

LOUISE. Oh! your words are kind, and delude me for a time. They would almost make me believe in the possibility of this dream; but alas! as the years go by, the child will grow and would always be there to recall the crime. That destroys even the illusion of happiness.

THE GRANDMOTHER. You are not reasonable.

LOUISE. Do not say that, grandmother; I see only too clearly.

THE GRANDMOTHER. If you tell your brother your decision, he will again be angry.

LOUISE. Yes, I know my resistance displeases him; but it is better to suffer alone than that others should suffer too. . . . [*She rises and carries the cradle near the window, then returns to the table.*] Tell me, grandmother, why does Jean keep Schmidt on the farm? Now that this man is completely cured, he should return to his country, or at least go away from here; he also makes us recall our misfortunes.

THE GRANDMOTHER. I have already spoken to your brother about it. He says that Schmidt is a good workman; he is very devoted to us. Jean will keep him as long as he wishes to stay on the farm.

LOUISE. Yes, I know that Schmidt is very grateful for the care I gave him after I found him dying in the wood; but now that he is cured, his presence can only revive our miseries.

THE GRANDMOTHER. Yes, little girl, you saved his life; when you took help to him he had not two hours to live; so he would do anything in the world to pay his debt of gratitude. You will see, Schmidt will be of use to you one day.

LOUISE. Maybe; but I would rather see him gone.

THE GRANDMOTHER. Jean is very fond of him; he is active and skillful. The new door that he has just made for the house is beautifully done. By the way, what did he do with the other door?

LOUISE. He stored it carefully away in the cellar. I wonder what he wants it for.

THE GRANDMOTHER. I really wonder.

LOUISE. Jean and Schmidt have odd ideas. Jean listens a little too much to him; they are always brewing something between them.

THE GRANDMOTHER. Both wish you well. Jean is a little quick-tempered, but his heart is good. Here he is! [JEAN *enters*.] Well, my boy, what good work have you done today?

JEAN. Oh, nothing particular; I just came back with Bernard. He asked for news of you, Louise.

LOUISE. Bernard need not trouble himself about me; one would say he takes a malicious pleasure in bothering me.

JEAN. I think rather that it is you who abuse his kindness and generosity. He loves you and wants you for his wife; he wants to make you happy.

LOUISE. It is impossible.

JEAN. It is impossible! I see nothing impossible in it. You are playing a risky game. Remaining single, you will be at the mercy of people all your life. You know the world is more inclined to malice than to sympathy. Married, you would be respected. You are trifling with your fate.

LOUISE. Yes, I know all that; Bernard is a good fellow, but shall I not always carry with me the shame of a ruined creature? Will I not eternally drag this chain of infamy? What would become of Bernard under this constant disgrace? No, no; I do not want to marry; I must remain alone with my child.

THE GRANDMOTHER. Louise, Louise, you exaggerate. At your age one should not see life so dark. If Bernard marries you, it is because he has weighed everything, looked everything squarely in the face. He knows what he is doing; he will make you happy, I am sure.

LOUISE. The mere idea makes me shudder. To give myself to this man, whom I esteem and love, seems to me a crime; and if children should come later, they would curse their mother. What sufferings would then be his and mine! Oh! no, no; never, never!

JEAN. You don't know what you are talking about. Who do you suppose would tell to your children the terrible fate that befell you without any fault of yours? Once you are married, everyone will forget.

LOUISE. No; the world never forgets. It cannot forget that our house here was almost the only one which the Germans left standing in the village. You know how some of our neighbors talk. Last Sunday at mass I heard a woman behind me say: "See, there is Louise with her little Prussian brat." I almost fainted with shame; I wanted to sink in the earth. I repeat, it is impossible, impossible; never, never, never!

JEAN. Who dared to say that?

LOUISE. I don't know; but what does it matter? I cannot even go to mass any more. Henceforth I will go and pray God in the solitude of the

woods; happiness has been denied to me, but if I go through life doing my duty, He will one day give me a heart at peace.

THE GRANDMOTHER. [*Sobbing softly.*] To think that it is I who am the cause of this child's sorrow!

LOUISE. Grandmother, let us leave this subject; speak of it no more, will you?

JEAN. Louise only did her duty. [*Going to* LOUISE *and putting his hand on her shoulder.*] Console yourself, little sister; we will make you happy. Now go to your work.

THE GRANDMOTHER. [*Wiping her eyes.*] Louise, help me to bed; I am tired.

JEAN. Bernard is coming here presently; it is useless for him to see you.

LOUISE. That's true; but, above all, rid him of the idea of this marriage.

THE GRANDMOTHER. Good night, my boy.

JEAN. Good night, grandmother.

[*The two women leave the stage.*]

JEAN. [*To himself.*] What a sad thing is war! What ruins it draws after it! How many innocent victims are caught in its horrible machinery and sacrificed without pity! What hate, what wretchedness comes in its wake! One shudders with horror. Now, what is to be done with that child, the only obstacle to the happiness of Louise? What is to be done?

[*Someone knocks at the door.*]

JEAN. Come in!

[BERNARD *and* SCHMIDT *enter and seat themselves at the table.*]

BERNARD. Well, where is Louise?

JEAN. She is busy around the farm.

BERNARD. What did she decide?

JEAN. She will not consent.

BERNARD. I must speak to her.

JEAN. I think it is useless; what neither grandmother nor I could obtain, I doubt if you will. The child is in the way; it is the main obstacle. I think we had better to go back to our plan of last week.

BERNARD. What! to take away the child? Don't think of it.

JEAN. Just a moment. Let us send it to the country for awhile; say for a month or two.

BERNARD. Louise would lose her mind.

JEAN. Bah! it would only be a question of a few days. To get back her child, she will consent in a short time. What do you think about it, Schmidt?

SCHMIDT. You can use me as you please. For Louise's sake no sacrifice will be too great. She saved my life; it belongs to her.

JEAN. You said you had a brother at Coblenz?

SCHMIDT. Yes; he is a farmer near Coblenz. He has several children; it would be simply one more.

BERNARD. I fear lest the taking away of her child will drive her to frenzy.

JEAN. I believe there is no danger; it is only a

question of time. Besides, Schmidt will send us news every week. Anyway, let us try. I think that once her child is gone, she will consent to marry you.

BERNARD. How long does it take to make the trip?

SCHMIDT. About twelve hours.

BERNARD. There will be no danger for the child?

SCHMIDT. None; leaving here in the evening, it would be in safety at noon the next day.

BERNARD. After our marriage, she could have her child come back; you could bring it back to us.

SCHMIDT. Certainly, Bernard; I am at your orders.

JEAN. Then you are willing to leave with the child?

SCHMIDT. Whenever you wish.

JEAN. Very well. What arrangements shall we make; when will you start?

SCHMIDT. I could take the express this very evening; it reaches Louvain about ten o'clock. I shall be at Cologne tomorrow morning, and by noon at my brother's.

JEAN. Yes, but I cannot give you the child till Louise has gone to bed, about nine o'clock; that would still leave you time enough to reach Louvain before ten.

BERNARD. I will wait for Schmidt on the road with the carriage.

JEAN. Schmidt will send you news, and we will give it to Louise; she must not know where the child is.

SCHMIDT. It is understood. I will write to Bernard.

JEAN. Very well. Schmidt, go make your arrangements; have some milk boiled to feed the child on the way.

SCHMIDT. All right. I will be ready at nine o'clock, and be here at the door; Bernard will be waiting for me at the turn of the road. As soon as I arrive at Coblenz, I will send you news.

JEAN. [*Rising.*] Well, that's all settled. Then I'll see you later.

[BERNARD *and* SCHMIDT *exeunt.*]

JEAN. [*Pensive.*] Yes . . . yes . . . it is not very difficult to take the child away; but afterward, when Louise sees that her child has gone, what a scene we shall have! I dare not think of it. Of course, I could always bring it back if she is too violent. Poor Louise . . . has she ever deserved such sufferings? People speak of divine justice, but all this is too much of a muddle for me. Surely, it was her courage and devotion to duty that caused all her misfortune. Where, then, is the recompense for worth, for right, for honor and virtue. One would rather say that in this life there is happiness only for knaves, and success for villians. Poor sister; what will her awakening be!

LOUISE. [*She enters and goes at once to the cradle.*] The poor little thing; it is still asleep!

JEAN. Bernard and Schmidt have just gone. Let us have supper, Louise. I will go to bed early;

tomorrow there will be a great deal of work to do in the field.

LOUISE. Very well; I will lay the table. We shall sup in five minutes. [*She takes the cradle and carries it into the adjoining room, then returns and sets the table; while she attends to her household duties, the conversation continues.*] Then Bernard has abandoned his project?

JEAN. Not at all; not at all. He is patient, and does not despair of convincing you.

LOUISE. The poor man! Sincerely, I pity him.

JEAN. Oh, he is a determined fellow; he decides with energy. Nothing will stop him from carrying out his purpose. You are wrong in vexing him and driving him to desperation.

LOUISE. I wish only his good. In a few years he will be very grateful to me for having resisted a passion as unreasonable as it is wrong. He ought to understand that it does not concern us alone, but also those who might be born . . . There, supper is ready.

[*They sit down and continue talking.*]

JEAN. Oh, Bernard does not look into it so far; he loves you, he wants you for his wife; he wishes to protect you; as for consequences, he cares little.

LOUISE. He is wrong; it is precisely the consequences from which I foresee terrible trouble, and of which he should think.

JEAN. [*Sharply.*] Listen, Louise; you tire me with your foreboding and your arguments.

LOUISE. Yes, yes; I know it very well. You, who should protect and advise me like a father, you join with the others to harass me; besides, it is not so much that you want to see me married to Bernard; no, no, any other would do as well; you would like to see me go away from here. You want me to leave the farm; that is the truth.

JEAN. I confess that this is one of the reasons I would like to see you married; the people of the neighborhood are beginning to gossip. Once you are married, they would keep still.

LOUISE. If you don't want me to stay here, I will go to the city with my child; but marry, never! Do you understand; never!

JEAN. [*Angrily.*] You will probably change your mind before long.

LOUISE. Never! never!

JEAN. [*Getting up.*] We shall see.

[*Weeping quietly, she clears the table;* JEAN *takes off his shoes and gets ready for bed; he throws his shoes in a corner of the room.*]

JEAN. [*Yawning.*] Oouw . . . I am glad to go to bed; I am tired. Good night.

[*He disappears in his bedroom.* LOUISE *does not answer; when alone, she goes to her child, embraces it, and places it on the floor before the Virgin; then kneels before the statue.*]

LOUISE. [*She prays.*] O God, the compassionate! You who have taken my father and mother. Alone on earth, without friends, without support,

what is going to become of me? What will become of the child which Thou hast sent? . . . What fate awaits us? This child, born of a crime, repulsed by everyone; what a life of wretchedness is opened before it! No one to love it, no one to protect it; what will become of it . . . what will become of it! [*Raising her arms toward the Virgin.*] Oh, Mother of our Lord, Thou who hast suffered, regard our sufferings; have pity on my child; have pity on this little innocent who did not ask to be born. Mother of the Saviour, guide his steps through the sad life which he begins. [*She raises the child toward the Virgin.*] Blessed Mother, protect him . . . have pity . . . have pity.

[*She rises, embraces the child, and carries it back to her room. The stage is slightly darkened.* LOUISE *withdraws into her room, of which she leaves the door ajar.* JEAN *opens his door softly, and watches the movements of his sister. He waits awhile, then quietly enters the room of* LOUISE *and reappears with the child, which he wraps in a blanket.*]

LOUISE. [*Drowsily, from her room.*] Is that you, Jean?

JEAN. Yes; it is I.

LOUISE. What are you doing?

JEAN. I forgot to unchain the dogs; I will be back in a moment.

[*He goes toward the door and opens it.* SCHMIDT *enters and gives him a letter; he puts his fingers on his lips to indicate silence.* JEAN *throws the letter on the table, then the two men go out. The stage is empty for a moment, then* LOUISE *comes out in her nightdress. She looks around, then slowly she goes to the door and listens.*]

LOUISE. What is that? . . . a carriage on the road . . . [*Thoughtfully she returns to the table and sees the letter; she takes it, looks at it for an instant perplexedly, then opens and reads it aloud.*] "Madamoiselle Louise:

"Your brother wishes me to take your child to the country for a time. I will give you news every week. Fear nothing; I swear to watch over it. After your marriage, I will bring it back.

"Yours with devotion until death,

"Josef Schmidt."

[*She first rushes into her room; then, bewildered and holding her head with both hands, she cries out in a desperate low voice.*] The child is gone!

[*She stops an instant, then flies to the door; but* JEAN *enters and bars the way.*]

LOUISE. My child! . . . my child! . . . I want my child! What have you done with it? You have no right to take it from me. You are going to kill it; without me it will die!

JEAN. Don't make so much noise. I have sent the

child to the country for a few days. It will be all right there.

LOUISE. No, no; I do not want to be separated from my child! I do not want to! I do not want to! No one has the right to take it from me.

[*She rushes again toward the door. He forcibly restrains her.*]

JEAN. Louise, stay here; do not make a scandal; the neighbors meddle enough already.

LOUISE. [*Bursting into tears and throwing herself at his feet.*] Jean! Jean! give me back my child! give me back my child! In the name of our dear mother, give me back my child! . . .

JEAN. All right! In a few days; in a week or two.

LOUISE. God! God! They are going to kill it! They are going to kill it! Pity! pity! pity!

[*Holding her head, she totters, and falls in a faint at his feet.*]

MARTYR

Act III.

ACT III.

The stage shows the village market-place. The church is at the right; three or four steps lead to the entrance. On the other side of the square is a beer-house, with a table and some chairs before the door.]

[*At the rising of the curtain* BERNARD *and* LOUISE *are talking in the center of the market place.* LOUISE *is dressed in black; she wears a little silver cross at her neck. The door of the church is open. It is Sunday, and the villagers are going to high mass.*]

BERNARD. So Jean told you that I took your child away, did he not?

LOUISE. Well, he told me that so long as I refused to consent to marry you, you would keep my child away.

BERNARD. Louise, the child is in good health, and very well where it is. Schmidt is watching over

it; but if you will marry me, we will return it to you immediately.

LOUISE. I don't understand your conditions. What right have you to take my child away? By what right do you keep it, without telling me where it is? By what right do you hinder me from seeing it? It is infamous! Listen, Bernard. I loved you; now, I hate you!

BERNARD. You can have your child back whenever you wish. Let us marry, and two days after, it will be at our home.

LOUISE. No! Besides, you fill me with horror. You take advantage of my weakness because I am without friends and without defense. You keep my child from me; but beware! I will make a complaint, and you will be obliged to return it to me.

BERNARD. Louise, I love you, and I will have your child brought back; but as for making a complaint, that will not help you. You have no proof against me; you will simply make trouble for your brother. It is he who took it away.

LOUISE. Yes, yes; you depend upon that to keep me quiet; but I will be revenged.

BERNARD. [*Approaching* LOUISE *and taking her hand.*] I beg you, my dear Louise, be calm; we have taken your child away in the hope of making you change your decision.

LOUISE. [*Drawing her hand away brusquely.*] Yes, and you have gained just the contrary. More

than ever, I see how impossible this marriage is; you yourself will be thankful one day that I refused.

[*The church bell strikes, calling the congregation to the service. Some villagers pass* LOUISE *whispering; a woman turns and points her out scornfully.*]

BERNARD. [*Again taking* LOUISE'S *hand.*] Come, dear Louise; you know that I will never be happy without you. It was wrong to take away your child, but it was because of my love for you that I consented to it.

[*At this moment* MARTHA *passes, going to mass with two of her friends; they see* LOUISE, *laugh sneeringly, and enter the church.*]

LOUISE. Do you see, Bernard, to what you would be exposed from morning till night? Do you hear those girls? Their laugh breaks my heart. I die with shame! Martha tattles in the village; she is jealous; she loves you; marry her.

BERNARD. No, no; I cannot bear that woman. I will make her keep silence. At the first opportunity, she is going to get a lesson.

LOUISE. For the love of Heaven, do not make a scandal. Am I not unhappy enough as it is?

BERNARD. Dear Louise, it only depends upon yourself to be happy.

LOUISE. Well, first have my child brought back;

then later, when everything is forgotten, then perhaps . . . One never knows.

BERNARD. Listen, Louise; I will have your child brought back next week; I will talk to Jean about it today.

LOUISE. Oh, Bernard! Thanks! thanks! We will always be friends.

BERNARD. [*Shaking her hand.*] That's all right; that's all right.

LOUISE. Mass has begun; I must be off. Good bye.

BERNARD. Good bye, Louise.

[*She disappears in the church.* BERNARD *goes over to the beershop, seats himself at the table before the door, and calls the keeper.*]

BERNARD. Here, Roulands! Give me a pot of beer.

ROULANDS. [*Thrusting his head out.*] Yes, sir; yes, sir.

[*He goes to get the beer.*]

BERNARD. Poor Louise, poor little girl; to think that it is these cursed Prussians who have caused all my troubles. They murdered my parents; they murdered my sisters, my young brother; they burned our farm; Jacques is blind. The ruffians have left me nothing. They violated my fiance; they have embittered my whole life.

[*The innkeeper returns with a pot of beer, and pours* BERNARD *a drink.*]

BERNARD. [*Throwing money on the table.*] Have you seen Jean this morning?

ROULANDS. No, Bernard, not yet; but he will surely come. By the way, how is the little Louise? I saw you talking together a few moments ago.

BERNARD. How is she? As you saw yourself, she is very well. Why this question?

ROULANDS. They say in the village that she got rid of her child.

BERNARD. Bah! and who says that?

ROULANDS. Oh, I heard it. You know very well that we do not lack evil tongues.

BERNARD. People busy themselves about things which don't concern them.

ROULANDS. It is true. Louise is a good girl, and should be pitied. Martha has a vile tongue, and sneers at her whenever she can. It seems to me that she is jealous of Louise.

BERNARD. Martha will be sorry for it one of these days; besides, I am going to stop all that gossip. I am going to marry Louise; afterward, let the first one I find slandering her beware.

ROULANDS. You are going to marry Louise!

BERNARD. And why not? What is there strange in that?

ROULANDS. You would adopt the Prussian's child?

BERNARD. I will legalize Louise's child.

ROULANDS. That is very generous, Bernard.

BERNARD. I do not see any generosity in that. I love Louise; I marry her, and quite naturally I take the child also.

ROULANDS. That's absolutely right, Bernard. Look, there are your friends coming.

[JEAN *and three other villagers enter; they shake hands with* BERNARD.]

JEAN. Good morning, old fellow.

THE THREE OTHER MEN. Hallo, Bernard. Good morning, Bernard.

[*All shake hands and sit down.*]

BERNARD. [*To the innkeeper.*] Here, another pot of beer!

[*The innkeeper brings the beer and glasses.*]

JEAN. Then it is here that you go to mass on Sunday, eh?

BERNARD. My boy, every Sunday I go to the first mass in the early morning. I don't like to go to high mass; it is too long and too dry.

[*The friends burst out laughing.*]

JEAN. All right, all right! You are nothing but a heathen. Come; to Bernard's health!

[*They drink.*]

BERNARD. And then I come here to learn the gossip of the village. It is sometimes very interesting.

JEAN. True; and what is the news today?

BERNARD. It seems that Martha is slandering your sister.

JEAN. Let her take care; one of these days I will catch her. They say that she has a case on you.

BERNARD. She stops me every time she meets me.

JEAN. Does she speak to you of Louise?

BERNARD. She has never dared.

JEAN. She is a sly one. By the way, it seems that the government is preparing a new military organization.

BERNARD. Yes, I saw that in the papers; they are to get ready, by degrees, for a new butchery.

JEAN. It looks that way to me. Unhappily it is always us, the people of the country, who are the fools in the trick. Always we pay the piper.

BERNARD. If the Germans take forty years again to prepare for the next war, we shall not see it.

JEAN. I don't want to see it again.

BERNARD. Neither do I. We have all seen enough.

JEAN. My faith! How we got out alive from some of those furnaces, only the devil knows. For example, at Healen, you remember how the hulans ran into our guns and batteries, and rolled pell mell in the ravine, cavalrymen and horses all in the same porridge?

BERNARD. Heavens, if I remember it! But the greatest day of butchery was at the battle of Aerschot. That bayonet charge! My friends, I shall always see it. My brother had just fallen at my side, struck by a ball; I became mad with fury; I howled that I would have the skin of ten Teutons, and while ripping them up I counted them. [*He gets up and pretends to charge with the bayonet.*] One . . . and two . . . and three . . . and four . . . and five; and I ran them through, sixteen, one after another; and that did

not take me more than a quarter of an hour. The seventeenth, seeing me come, threw himself on his knees, let fall his gun, and begged for mercy, crying: "Ich habe sieben Kinder; Ich habe sieben Kinder."* I stopped, sorry for his seven children; I went a little distance off; he seized his gun, aimed at me, and was just going to fire, when he received a blow on his head which stretched him out on his back forever; a comrade had saved my life. Without this masterly blow, I should not be here to drink with you, my friends. Jacques is blind, but I have avenged him; they have paid dearly for it, the bandits!

JEAN. Yes, the Prussians will remember the Belgians for a long time. You, Bernard, were mighty lucky never to get a scratch.

BERNARD. That's true. I always came out safe and sound; that allowed me to do my part of the work. [*He raises his glass.*] Come, my friends, let us drink to the brave, fallen in these combats of giants.

ALL. [*Rising.*] Bravo, Bernard! bravo!

[*They empty their glasses, and sit down again.*]

JEAN. Yonder, see, Jacques is going to church; the poor fellow will get there for the benediction!

[JACQUES *is advancing, groping with his cane, toward the church;* JEAN *gets up and leads him to the table.*]

*"I have seven children."

JEAN. Come, Jacques, drink a glass of beer with your friends.

JACQUES. [*Recognizing* JEAN'S *voice.*] Oh, Jean! It is you! Thank you, my friend, thank you.

[*All shake* JACQUES'S *hand heartily.*]

JEAN. Then you were going to mass, Jacques?

JACQUES. Yes; I think I shall be late. I made a mistake and lost my way. I have been at least an hour on the road, without knowing where I was.

BERNARD. I told you not to venture so far alone.

JACQUES. That's true; but I love to go to mass on Sunday. As I can no more see the light of day, I am preparing myself to contemplate the divine light.

JEAN. My dear Jacques, some misfortune will happen to you one of these days, if you go about the roads alone.

JACQUES. Ah! my friends, what greater evil can come to me than being blind. [*He gets up.*] I am only twenty-three, and I am condemned to an eternal night; . . . for you, the glorious sun rises every morning; . . . for me it is night; . . . for you, spring returns with the roses, and you see the flowers in the meadows bloom again; . . . for me it is night . . . always night. At the close of the day you walk in couples along the paths, and the valleys resound with your songs of love. On Sunday evening, when music invites the sweethearts to dance down there under

the lindens, I, alone in my little room, hear their cries of joy, which stab me to the heart. In my solitude, night has at last penetrated even my soul. You, my friends, who contemplate the beauties of nature, you cannot understand the intense torture of this night without end. Your night, when it descends over the earth, is resplendent with millions of stars, all scintillating, all mysterious. Your night is full of beauty . . . [*He stretches out his arms before him into space.*] Alas! . . . Alas! . . . in mine, there is never a ray; . . . mine is ever blackness, night without a gleam . . . night everlasting . . . night without hope . . . torment without end!

JEAN. [*Taking* JACQUES *by his arm.*] Come, Jacques; come, my friend, let us drink.

JACQUES. No, no; thanks, Jean, thanks; I am not thirsty; I just drank at the fountain at the turn of the road. Beer is good when one sees it run; for me, it is insipid. But thank you just the same, my friend.

[*He goes toward the church entrance, but at this moment the mass is ended, and the congregation come out. He turns, groping his way with his stick; he leaves the stage.*]

JEAN. Poor friend!

BERNARD. There; mass is finished. I will lead Jacques home. Good-bye, my friends.

JEAN. Good-bye, Bernard, till this evening.

BERNARD. Yes, come to see me this evening; I want to talk with you.

[*The people are coming out of the church; they stop in little groups on the market place to talk.* MARTHA *stops with some friends near the door.* LOUISE *comes out slowly. The door of the church is shut. Just as* LOUISE *passes by,* MARTHA *stops her.*]

MARTHA. [*Mockingly.*] He! Louise! How fine you look today.

[MARTHA'S *friends giggle.*]

LOUISE. [*Timidly.*] Martha, I am as usual.

MARTHA. No, no; today you have put on your fine dress. That is easily understood; when we go to meet a lover we put on our fine dress!

LOUISE. I wear my best dress to go to mass on Sunday.

MARTHA. [*Satirically.*] Indeed; what do you come to mass for?

LOUISE. Just what you come for, Martha.

MARTHA. How; you dare to compare yourself to me!

LOUISE. I do not understand you, Martha.

MARTHA. You do not understand me! What are you doing among respectable people?

[*The villagers make a circle around the two women.*]

LOUISE. I think myself as respectable as you, Martha.

MARTHA. What a cheek! Oh! oh! she is as respectable as we are!

[*The villagers seem much amused.*]

LOUISE. Why have you such a spite against me? I have never done you the least harm.

MARTHA. No; but that does not say that you would not do much better to stay at home, than to come here to exhibit yourself at church.

LOUISE. You are trying to pick a quarrel. I have never harmed you or anyone else, and I have the same right to come to church as others.

MARTHA. No, you have not. The priest should throw you out.

LOUISE. The priest orders me to come. Besides, what is it to you?

MARTHA. Ha! nothing, nothing at all! [*Mockingly.*] You have a right to sell yourself to whomsoever you please; even to the Prussians, as you did during the war.

LOUISE. You know very well, Martha, that I neither sold nor gave myself to anyone.

MARTHA. Yes, yes; we are agreed on this. Everyone knows that your house is the only one in the village that was not burned.

LOUISE. I have nothing to say. Everyone knows what happened.

MARTHA. Yes, but nobody likes your story.

[*Some women make signs of assent.*]

LOUISE. Listen, Martha, I'll tell you what started all this fuss. You are jealous because Bernard does not want you.

MARTHA. [*Piqued.*] Bernard! . . . I snap my finger at Bernard, the great blockhead; you can

have him. He will play father to your little Prussian! By the way, what have you done with your German sprout?

LOUISE. That is my affair.

MARTHA. You think so? Very well, we will denounce you; we will find out what you have done with it. [*Approaching* LOUISE.] Good-for-nothing girl . . . creature of soldiers . . . you sold yourself to the Prussians so that they would spare your farm. Now you have done away with your child; but we will find it again; and we will also stop you from soiling decent people here at church.

LOUISE. I will not answer, my girl; I scorn your insults.

[*She tries to go, but* MARTHA *bars the way.*]

MARTHA. [*Going close to* LOUISE.] Yes, you with your sanctimonious airs! Nobody is your dupe; everyone knows you. [*Noticing the silver cross which* LOUISE *wears at her neck, she seizes it, and holds it a moment between her fingers.*] And so, Miss carries a cross at her neck! An honest girl like you has no need of that!

[*She snatches the cross, throws it on the ground, and steps on it.*]

LOUISE. [*Angrily.*] My mother's cross!

[*She thrusts* MARTHA *back in order to recover her cross;* MARTHA *resists; finally* LOUISE *regains the cross.* MARTHA *and her friends threaten* LOUISE, *who has backed up to the*

steps of the church. The door opens, and the PRIEST *appears in his surplice.*]

THE PRIEST. Well, well, what is the matter? Why all these cries and all this noise on Sunday?

MARTHA. This creature has insulted us.

[*She points to* LOUISE.]

THE PRIEST. My child, what has happened?

LOUISE. Martha waited for me coming out from mass; she insulted me, snatched my mother's cross from me, threw it on the ground, and stepped on it.

MARTHA. We do not want this harlot in our church.

THE PRIEST. Martha, I forbid you to speak thus. [*With a loud voice, and raising his arms as if to protect* LOUISE.] Understand well, my friends, that Louise is as pure as the most virtuous among you. Her soul is as virgin as that of an angel. Do not you judge her; the Lord alone is the supreme judge. [*To* LOUISE.] Come, my child.

[*He leads* LOUISE *into the church;* MARTHA *and her friends slink away; the villagers applaud the priest.*]

MARTYR

Act IV.

ACT IV.

[*Four years later. The stage the same as in preceding act, showing the market-place.* VON RAUCH, *now a general, is sitting with two officers before the tavern at the table. They have been sent by their government to witness the annual manoeuvres of the Belgian army.* VON RAUCH *and* VON BLIESS *are seated facing the audience, and* LIEUTENANT ROSSAK *at the side of the table in such a way that he sees the stage. A large scar is visible on* VON RAUCH'S *face.*]

VON RAUCH. Well, gentlemen, this is a country through which I passed during the war. After the Belgian manoeuvres, it will be necessary to return immediately, so I wished to see it again while we had leisure.

VON BLIESS. A fine country, indeed!

VON RAUCH. Yes; but the village was badly demolished during the war.

VON BLIESS. You don't see much of that now; these good people have almost rebuilt it.

VON RAUCH. The inhabitants are marvellously industrious. That, indeed, is the real wealth of a country.

ROSSAK. What a pity that we were not able to keep it!

VON BLIESS. Lieutenant, in twenty or thirty years we shall come again, and then we will take better precautions.

VON RAUCH. Dear Captain, you are wrong; what the empire could not do in 1914, neither we, nor our children, nor our grandchildren shall be able to do; this is a certainty.

VON BLIESS. It is evident that we shall never find our neighbors asleep again as at that time.

VON RAUCH. The lesson was a hard one for us as well as for them. Remember that in times to come, the allies will dispute among themselves; they will perhaps fight, but when it comes to keeping the empire in a circle of iron, they will always agree.

ROSSAK. Then your conclusion, General, is that we will have no more war?

VON RAUCH. That is my idea; in our country our armies will only have to fight the enemy within—socialism, the people, the working classes; as for outside, there will not be much to do for a long time.

ROSSAK. Then, General, you condemn me to remain a lieutenant all my life?

VON RAUCH. Not exactly, not exactly; but you will never be promoted general on the battle-field. Don't count on it.

ROSSAK. Look, there is a blind man and a child walking together. This man is quite young.

[JACQUES *comes on the stage, holding in one hand a stick, and by the other a little boy about four years old; they walk slowly.*]

VON RAUCH. This man probably lost his sight during the war. [JACQUES *passes near the three officers;* VON RAUCH *calls him.*] Eh! my friend; where are you going?

JACQUES. [*Stopping.*] Sir, are you calling me?

VON RAUCH. Yes, my friend, you.

JACQUES. Well, I have been taking a walk with my little friend. Now I am taking him to his mother.

VON RAUCH. [*To* ROSSAK.] Lieutenant, lead this brave fellow here to the table. [*To* JACQUES.] Say, my friend, will you have a drink?

[ROSSAK *seats* JACQUES *near* VON RAUCH, *who takes the child on his knees.*]

JACQUES. Certainly, sir, with pleasure. I am thirsty; it has been very hot today.

VON RAUCH. Here, innkeeper, give our friend something to drink.

ROULANDS. Very well, sir. Well, Jacques, what will you take?

JACQUES. Give me a glass of beer.

[*The innkeeper brings the beer.*]

VON RAUCH. So you were walking with this pretty little blond fellow?

[*He caresses the child.*]

JACQUES. Yes, sir; the child has only a mother, and she works very hard; I make myself useful, and take him out for a walk.

VON RAUCH. [*Drawing a piece of money from his pocket and giving it to the child.*] Here, my little boy; buy some bonbons.

THE CHILD. Thank you, sir.

[*He throws his little arms around* VON RAUCH'S *neck. The General continues to caress him during the conversation.*]

JACQUES. Yes, sir, Johnny is a good little chap; but the village children will not play with him.

VON RAUCH. Indeed; and why not?

JACQUES. Ah, it is quite a story, and not a very pleasant one. Let us not speak of it.

VON RAUCH. As you like, my friend. . . . And you, are you entirely blind?

JACQUES. Yes, completely; it is a present from the Prussians.

[*The three men look at each other in silence.*]

VON RAUCH. Do you not believe, my friend, that the Germans also have many blind and crippled among them?

JACQUES. Certainly, I believe it; it would be sad if they had not.

VON RAUCH. Why?

JACQUES. Well, because it is they who started the war. They who fell on our country, and ruined everything; then, when we were fighting like men, like soldiers, they made war like bandits, like murderers. Their punishment can never be great enough.

VON RAUCH. Were you born in this country?

JACQUES. Yes, sir; my parents had a large farm. Before the war, we were all living happily; when the Germans passed through here, they murdered my parents, my two sisters, and my little brother, a child of twelve years.

VON RAUCH. Probably someone at the farm shot at the troops as they passed.

JACQUES. No, no; there was no weapon at our house, not one. Besides, here in the village the Germans committed every crime imaginable — murder, fire, assault! Nothing was lacking.

VON RAUCH. These things are inevitable during war.

JACQUES. That's the excuse of the Germans; but to kill children and violate women because the sharpshooters fell upon them was a singular fashion of defending themselves. The truth is, they thought they could commit these crimes with impunity; they were crimes doubled by cowardice.

VON RAUCH. My friend, these cases of which you speak were very rare.

JACQUES. Very rare! . . . on the contrary, very frequent. We have thousands of German children in our country; hundreds of nuns are mothers today. [*Feeling the arm of the child, and pointing to it.*] Here, this very child is the son of a Prussian officer, of a captain of the German army, who outraged a young girl that was to be the bride of my brother; he was called Von Rauch.

[*The two officers look at* VON RAUCH *with surprise.*]

VON RAUCH. [*Not at all disconcerted.*] Well, well; and are there any proofs against that Captain Von Rauch.

JACQUES. I don't know, sir; it is a story that is told in the country.

VON RAUCH. Do you know the people who spread this story?

JACQUES. The only witness was Jean Bruneels, the brother of the girl. He says he wounded the scoundrel in the face with his bayonet just as he was escaping from the house.

[*The two officers look at the scar on* VON RAUCH'S *face.*]

VON RAUCH. [*Pointing to the child on his knees.*] Then this child would be the son of Von Rauch?

JACQUES. Yes, sir; without any doubt.

VON RAUCH. Nevertheless, if this Jean Bruneels has no proof, how can he claim that this child is Von Rauch's son?

JACQUES. Bruneels says that he has the proofs.

VON RAUCH. Truly, this Bruneels has proofs?

JACQUES. So it seems, sir.

[*Enter* LOUISE *from the rear.* VON RAUCH, *facing the audience, does no see her; neither does she recognize him.*]

LOUISE. [*Stands motionless at the rear of the stage for a few moments, contemplating the group.*] Well, well, Jacques; you are here drinking while I am looking for you everywhere. I was much frightened. [*Calling the child.*] Come on, Johnny; come quickly!

[*The child jumps from* VON RAUCH'S *knees and runs to his mother, who embraces him; the three men are silent.*]

JACQUES. [*Getting up.*] There, there, my good Louise; I am coming.

LOUISE. [*Advancing toward* JACQUES.] Come, it is already late.

[*Approaching the table, she recognizes* VON RAUCH, *cries out, and rushes away with the child.*]

JACQUES. Louise! Louise! What's the matter? What's the matter?

VON BLIESS. Your friend has gone with the child, but we will take you as far as the road.

JACQUES. But she cried out . . . someone has harmed her.

VON RAUCH. No, no, my good fellow; but tell me, who is this woman?

JACQUES. It is Louise Bruneels; it is she of whom I was just speaking.

VON RAUCH. Then she is the mother of the little boy?

JACQUES. Yes, sir; it is she . . . but where has she gone?

VON RAUCH. She has probably gone home. Can you take me to these people?

JACQUES. Certainly; I go that way every day.

VON RAUCH. All right; let us go together. I wish to talk to them. [*To the two officers.*] Gentlemen, wait here for me; I will return presently.

[VON BLIESS *and* ROSSAK *salute.* VON RAUCH *and* JACQUES *leave the stage.*]

ROSSAK. Well, what do you say about that?

VON BLIESS. Moses! the General has a bad piece of business on his hands.

ROSSAK. I believe so too; he would have done better never to have risked himself here; better, even, never to have come to Belgium.

VON BLIESS. It is a very strange psychological phenomenon that one is always attracted toward the places where he has committed any notable action, good or bad.

ROSSAK. That's true; and the general has been taken in like many others; but he will get out of it with money. A few hundred francs will settle it all.

VON BLIESS. I wish so, for his sake.

ROSSAK. If Madame Von Rauch learns this

tomorrow at Brussels, there will be a pretty scandal.

VON BLIESS. It would make a fine bit of gossip for the whole world!

ROSSAK. O, the general will surely find a way to avoid that.

VON BLIESS. Yes, I think so too; but suppose that these good people are not willing to listen to anything, which would not at all astonish me; then the general's situation would be critical. The woman recognized Von Rauch at once; the blind man, although not seeing him, knew how to depict him in a striking manner; everything seems to indicate that they have the right man.

ROSSAK. Without any doubt. Do you believe that he can be arrested?

VON BLIESS. Certainly, it is a crime; and although committed in a time of war, it is no less a crime, and punishable no matter when discovered.

ROSSAK. The general is in a fine mess.

VON BLIESS. Yes, ten years of hard labor await our dear general if he cannot weather the storm.

ROSSAK. Ah, you understand, it is all right to have a good time with the girls, but one must be careful not to get caught. I am curious to know how the general is going to effect his retreat.

VON BLIESS. I am afraid it will be hard.

ROSSAK. Since we are to witness all this sordid affair, and since they will want to hush it up, we may find an unexpected promotion immediately.

VON BLIESS. My faith, Rossak, you are right! No matter how it turns, we cannot lose; I hadn't thought of that.

ROSSAK. I see you a colonel and me a captain in a few months. It is an ill wind that blows nobody good! Listen, people are coming down the road.

[VON RAUCH, *the* SHERIFF, JEAN, *and a number of villagers arrive on the stage, talking and gesticulating.*]

JEAN. [*To* VON RAUCH.] Ah! ah! my fine fellow; so you thought that with a little gold you would get out of this affair?

VON RAUCH. My boy, you accuse me of a thing of which you have absolutely no proof. To avoid scandal, I offer you five thousand francs; you did not accept; it is your business; you shall have nothing, and I will prefer a complaint for defamation of character.

JEAN. All right, all right; we know that you Prussians do not want cheek, but this time it won't do you any good.

[*The villagers surround* VON RAUCH, JEAN *and the* SHERIFF.]

VON RAUCH. [*To the* SHERIFF.] Then you want to take me to the justice court of Louvain in order to file a complaint against me?

THE SHERIFF. That's where we are going, dear sir.

VON RAUCH. Do you not know that I am sent to your country as the representative of the Emperor? You have no right to arrest me.

THE SHERIFF. [*Mockingly.*] General, you might be the representative of ten emperors, and you would have to follow me; I do not arrest you, I am taking you to the district attorney; he will know what to do with you better than I.

VON RAUCH. You will surely lose your position. Bruneels is mistaken; he has not the shadow of proof for what he claims.

JEAN. Look, then, my friends, at the fine hole in this face. [*He points to* VON RAUCH'S *scar.*] That is the scar of which I have so often spoken, and he pretends that I have no proofs! I have others, too, in reserve — something carefully guarded.

VON RAUCH. What do you mean?

JEAN. Ah! it is useless to talk of that now; it will dumbfound you.

VON RAUCH. [*To the two officers.*] Gentlemen, as I told you, during the war I passed through this village. One evening, I asked for something to eat at the farmhouse of this man. His sister seated me in the dining-room, when suddenly he burst in like a madman. I had to escape by the window. Once outside, he rushed upon me and gave me a blow in the face with his bayonet; now he pretends that this is the proof that I abused his sister. These are the facts. As you see, it is an accusation as ridiculous as it is insane.

JEAN. You forgot to tell that I had to break in the door to get in my house; you forget that our

grandmother was lying in the next room and heard everything, and finally that the child was born just at its time.

VON RAUCH. In all that you have said there is no proof. Your sister had a sweetheart, did she not?

[BERNARD, *forewarned by* JACQUES, *has come on the stage unnoticed. He listens to the general's words, then breaks through the crowd and throws himself upon* VON RAUCH.]

BERNARD. [*Grasping* VON RAUCH *by his shoulders and raising his fist threateningly.*] Wretch! . . . Louise was my sweetheart. For four years I have begged her to marry me; she always refused. You, ruffian, you have destroyed not only her happiness but also mine.

[VON BLIESS *and* ROSSAK *come to the help of* VON RAUCH; *all fists are raised; the villagers threaten to attack the three Germans.*]

THE SHERIFF. [*In a thundering voice and thrusting the villagers back, he protects* VON RAUCH.] Enough of that! enough of that! All these explanations are useless. You, Bruneels, you will explain before the judge. [*To* VON RAUCH.] You, General, I order you to follow me. Here I am the law.

[*The* SHERIFF *leaves the stage with* JEAN *and* VON RAUCH, *followed by the two officers and* BERNARD. *The villagers watch them go, and comment on the incident.*]

MARTYR

Act V.

ACT V.

[*The stage shows the office of the district attorney,* M. LE BRUN. *A large table in the center. Behind the table the chairs of the judge and his secretary. To the left and right, several chairs for the witnesses. Some doors at the rear, of which one is hung with a red drapery. At the rising of the curtain,* JEAN, BERNARD *and* LOUISE *are seated awaiting the arrival of the judge.*]

JEAN. It seems that Von Rauch continues to deny his guilt. All the newspapers are speaking of it today; see, here is quite a lot of it; it finishes like this: [*He shows the newspaper, and reads.*] "Madame Von Rauch, wife of the general, not daring to show herself in public with her husband, set out this morning for Berlin."

BERNARD. It is to be hoped the general will not try to take this road also.

JEAN. He would if they gave him a chance. But you may be sure, he is well guarded. Besides, the scar I gave him would not allow him to escape.

BERNARD. True, with that he would cross the frontier with difficulty. You served him as they did the criminals in the middle ages; you marked him with the red iron.

JEAN. Yes, but I chose the face instead of the arm.

BERNARD. That was all the better.

LOUISE. Good heavens, how I wish all this was over!

JEAN. You ought to be happy that this savage has fallen into our hands again.

BERNARD. Yes, Louise; when this scoundrel is behind bolts, and everyone knows that you were a victim and not at fault, there will no longer be any excuse for our not marrying.

LOUISE. True; but, unfortunately, the child will always be there. What is going to become of him?

BERNARD. Well, we will make an honest man of him, a good workman. Morally, a child is not the product of heredity, but of the environment in which he is raised.

LOUISE. Fortunately.

[*The* JUDGE *enters, accompanied by his* SECRETARY; *he goes toward the three; the* SECRETARY *sits down at the table.*]

LE BRUN. Good morning, gentlemen; good morning, Mlle. Bruneels. [*He shakes hands with*

LOUISE.] Well, how are you today?

LOUISE. Thank you, sir; very well.

LE BRUN. [*To* JEAN.] Now, then, M. Bruneels; we are going to prove the innocence of your sister.

JEAN. I hope so, sir.

LE BRUN. It is quite certain; Von Rauch can never clear himself from this wretched business. Anyway, we caught this one all right; what a pity we cannot get a few thousands of these brutes!

BERNARD. Will he be sentenced, your Excellency?

LE BRUN. He will get at least five years at hard labor.

JEAN. Your laws are not logical; a man who kills another is sentenced to death; but he who wrecks the life of a fellow creature merely gets five years in prison.

LE BRUN. There is some truth in your remark; but we judges do not make the laws, we simply apply them.

BERNARD. You agree, then, that this Von Rauch deserves hanging rather than a few years in prison.

LE BRUN. Under the circumstances in which this crime was committed, Von Rauch deserves no pity; but law is law.

JEAN. I hope they will give him the maximum.

LE BRUN. [*Going to the table.*] Have no fear; he will get his full dose.

[*Someone knocks on the door.*]

THE SECRETARY. Come in!

[VON RAUCH *and his lawyer enter.*]

LE BRUN. [*Bowing.*] Gentlemen, be seated.

[*They seat themselves at the right of the table.*]

LE BRUN. We are going to proceed at once with the testimony of the witnesses. Mr. Secretary, you will take it down; do not forget that this testimony will be produced at the trial. [*He rises.*] General Henry Von Rauch, you are accused of having violated Miss Louise Bruneels under circumstances related in the preceding examination. What have you to say in your defense?

VON RAUCH. All that these people assert is a plot of lies; they wish to ruin me.

LE BRUN. General, you said in your first examination that Bruneels and his sister refused your money. It is then a nobler impulse that prompts them to demand justice.

VON RAUCH. Jean Bruneels, in not producing here any tangible proof, has done me a great wrong, for which I demand justice in my turn.

LE BRUN. [*With sarcasm.*] General, I promise you that if Jean Bruneels does not bring material proofs of your guilt, he shall be severely punished. [*To* JEAN.] M. Bruneels, take the stand, and repeat your accusation.

JEAN. [*Coming forward and standing by the table.*] Yes, Your Excellency, I again accuse this man [*he points to* VON RAUCH] of having abused my sister on the same night when the Prussians set fire to Louvain.

LE BRUN. On what do you base your accusation?

JEAN. Returning to my house, I found at the door of my dwelling a German sentinel; I fired at him, and the man escaped, wounded.

VON RAUCH. [*Interrupting.*] You have no proof that I had placed a sentinel at your door.

JEAN. We will see that later. When I wished to enter, the door was locked on the inside; I had to break it in with the butt of my gun. When at last the door yielded, a man was escaping by the window and jumped out on the road. I attacked him and wounded him in the face with my bayonet. The accusing and ineffaceable mark is still on the face of this man.

VON RAUCH. What a medley of lies!

LE BRUN. [*Making a sign to* VON RAUCH *to be silent.*] Very well, Jean Bruneels; sit down. Louise Bruneels, come forward! [LOUISE *approaches slowly with drooping head, and stands near the table.*] Miss Bruneels, do you recognize in General Von Rauch the man who did the crime?

LOUISE. [*Raising her hand toward heaven.*] I swear that it is he.

LE BRUN. General, what do you answer?

VON RAUCH. This woman is mad. She accuses me without giving any proof. These people are all in a league with one another.

LE BRUN. General, I must tell you that the previous record of this woman is perfect. Her conduct before and after the crime has always been

exemplary; she would not accuse you if she was not absolutely certain.

THE LAWYER. I wish to remark to Your Honor that this entire accusation rests only on words.

LE BRUN. I beg you, sir, to be patient; we will see to that presently. [*To* LOUISE.] You are then certain that this man committed the assault?

LOUISE. Yes, Your Honor, I am certain.

LE BRUN. You have nothing more positive on which to rest your accusation?

LOUISE. I have no material proof. My grandmother heard a man in the house; she heard my cries; but as she is paralyzed, she could not get up, so there were no witnesses.

[JEAN *goes to the door with the red curtain, throws it on one side, and shows the old door of the farmhouse on which is still seen the German inscription written by* VON RAUCH.]

JEAN. One moment! one moment! [*He unwraps the door.*] And this — is this no witness?

VON RAUCH. [*Visibly excited.*] What do you mean?

JEAN. Is this not the door that I broke in, in order to get into my house? Is not this your writing and your signature?

VON RAUCH. Certainly; but that simply proves that instead of doing you a wrong, I rendered you a service; that, thanks to me, your house was spared; that, in return for a meal and a bottle of

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wine, I kept anyone from burning your dwelling.

LOUISE. This man never had a meal at our house. The wine that he drank was intended for our sick grandmother; he stole it.

JEAN. The reason why he wrote this [*pointing to the door*] is very apparent. He feared that he would be disturbed in his intentions. He probably planned to return often.

THE LAWYER. All these things are pure inventions, or simply mere suppositions. You have still brought nothing against my client, absolutely nothing. As I do not wish to expose him any longer to your sarcasm, we will await the trial.

[*He rises, and* VON RAUCH *does the same.*]

LE BRUN. [*Stopping them.*] Just a moment, gentlemen; just a moment. You have not seen all the witnesses. [*With a loud voice he calls.*] Josef Schmidt, orderly of Captain Von Rauch!

[*The door with the inscription opens, and* SCHMIDT *appears in military costume, carrying his gun as during the war of 1914. He closes the door behind him, and remains standing before it.*]

VON RAUCH. [*Springing to his feet, deadly pale.*] Mein Gott! Schmidt!

LE BRUN. Yes, Schmidt; it is indeed he . . . Josef Schmidt, what have you to say?

[*Before* SCHMIDT *can answer,* VON RAUCH *takes a few steps toward the middle of the stage, draws a pistol from his pocket, and*

shoots himself. His lawyer rushes to him, but he is too late. He staggers and falls in the center of the stage; he struggles some moments in agony, and then remains still. His lawyer makes a sign that the general is dead.]

LE BRUN. My friends, this man did justice himself. It was the best he could do; respect and repose to the dead! Bernard Valkiers, divine justice returns you your bride; her sublime soul has remained pure notwithstanding these terrible trials. [*He takes the hand of* LOUISE *and places it in that of* BERNARD.] Mlle. Bruneels, now you may marry. May the Lord bless and protect you!

LOUISE. [*Withdrawing her hand slowly.*] No, no; the child is still there. It is impossible! It is impossible!

[CURTAIN]

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